

INLAND NAVIGATION ISSUES, NEWS, AND VIEWS

NABO



NEWS

- **Property to stay with BW**
- **EA meeting impresses Chairman**
- **Blue Pickled Turd Award**



Issue 3 – May 2009

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HAVE WE GOT THE WRONG PERSON OR ADDRESS?

If you are getting a concessionary copy of this magazine as holder of a position you no longer hold, please give us details of your successor via our Freepost mail address, or email:

news.09@nabo.org.uk or
admin.09@nabo.org.uk

2009 CALENDAR

Council meeting*	NN Copy date
6th June	13th June
11th July	18th July
5th Sep	10th Oct
21st Nov	AGM
28th Nov	5th Dec

**Members are entitled to go to these meetings. Please arrange with Chairman or Gen. Sec.*

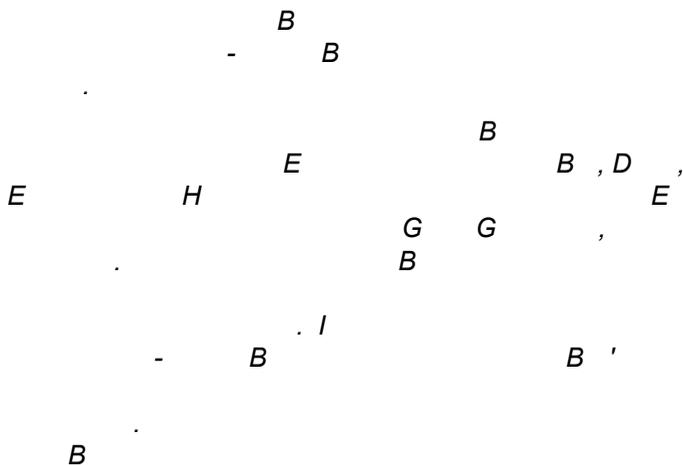
BW TO KEEP PROPERTY PORTFOLIO



The dark cloud over British Waterways' property portfolio caused by the Treasury's Operational Efficiency Review appears to be lifting now it has convinced the Government it is still the right custodian for its non-operational canalside premises.

The review's intention was "to consider whether the most efficient use is being made of the assets from the point of view of business model, organisational and customer requirements, capital structure, including whether the current position within the public sector is appropriate"

Good news, but there are conditions. BW's press release explains what they have to do:-



Simon Robbins comments: *It looks at first glance like good news for BW - they keep the property but have to adopt a model of greater separation between operational and property/commercial, something a few of us have long ago advocated, which may lead to better accountability. Here's hoping anyway!*

CHAIRMAN'S COLUMN



I went to a meeting this week hosted by the Environment Agency as the navigation authority for the Thames, Medway and Anglian Rivers. It was my first exposure to this area as NABO Chairman so I was keen to hear the team and the reports. I was impressed. Yes, they have the same problems as BW on funding and service levels. Yes, they are dealing with permit evasion and there are special problems around lock manning. But I did have to pinch myself a few times. Am I on the same planet? Evasion is 1%, so in this respect they are in much better shape than BW.

At one point EA were telling us of the importance of maintaining the '*Right of Navigation*' and the manager from the Anglian area reported on an initiative to improve '*services for boaters*'. What can you say? 'Yes please!' Shall we raise the registration fee some more specifically to further improve service? 'Not this year thank you'. They are considering the cost of living indexing for increases in the registration fees, and alignment of the charges across their different waterway regions.

There is clearly a good relationship between the EA and the user groups, and there was plenty of good discussion around the table. They are very keen to boost their boat registrations. The current numbers are below the historic peak so they have the capacity and want to increase the income. They have legal problems to solve like BW, and these are to be sorted this year, though I understand that this has taken 14 years already. So I came away thinking that EA are much further down the road than BW, and a single waterway authority would not be a good thing just now.

Your council met in April and there were several important items on the agenda. Firstly we had received a first

consultation paper from BW on mooring and licence issues. We spent a good deal of time assessing the implications of it and preparing for the first input.

This is work in progress, with Howard Anguish representing us at the 'WUSIG' national user group meeting. I expect this consultation to run for some time as the issues are not new and the answers are elusive.

You will remember that last month Council had decided to obtain professional advice over some of the legal issues around licences and the British Waterways Acts. We can expect to get the opinions before the summer. This is a major expenditure but in our judgement very necessary. I have exchanged letters with BW on some of the current issues. Although this has given us some insight into the thinking at Watford, BW's response was dismissive and lacks any justification that we can analyse. There isn't much you can do with '*we don't agree*'. We need to confirm whether BW has the legal powers to carry out its proposals.

What we see is that BW is running fast to interpret the British Waterways Acts and adjust your licence terms as they see fit. BW have been arrogantly 'in charge' for years so they have only themselves to blame. But we will help all we can, because they're our waterways, and we collectively have much more at stake. Yes I have some sympathy.

BW are reporting some progress on evasion. In the SE region, all of the 300 or so boats without a licence now have proceedings taking place at some level costing both money and occasional collateral damage due to errors in enforcement. BW are quite

capable of adding 2 and 2 and getting 3, or 5. One of our Council members had a letter of apology from a director after a recent error. I gather the tone of the BW enforcement correspondence is also judged to be quite aggressive. If you get such letters, do send us a copy.

I have been trying to get some feel for the numbers of 'continuous moorers'. The licence evasion rate is about 5% overall, some 1500 boats, mostly, but not all, on public moorings. BW also said that they have 3500 boats with no home mooring and they estimate that 70% are not following the guidelines. This is around 2500. Of course there will be some boats claiming home moorings who leave their boat on-line, but we don't have numbers for them. Together there are around 4000 boats on the canals not playing by the rules. BW is quite rightly going after the unlicensed boats and I wish them every success. But this will not result in a massive reduction in the line side occupation which is the next main complaint after unlicensed boats. A few will be scrapped, some will go onto other waterways, but most will remain. So what is the next step?

Removing the whole lot is a bit draconian, but when their licence contribution is offset by enforcement costs, then it is legitimate to say that they contribute little financially to the canals. So there is nothing to fear here. It is self evident that there are too many boats in some areas, and any effective change must result in them moving onto approved moorings, navigating round the system or going to the scrapyard. Whatever is done it must not destroy all that we cherish in terms of diverse lifestyles, the condition of the canals and the freedom to navigate for all.

There have been many ideas about alternative licences or permits, but in my view these potentially legalise the misbehaviour, and don't release

moorings for the rest of us to use. Currently there are not enough residential moorings in the critical areas, so even a high Roving Mooring Permit will not have the effect of moving boats into off-line moorings.

An alternative is to create a costlier continuous cruiser licence. Genuine continuous cruisers will cry 'unfair', and rightly so if they can demonstrate they are complying with the guidelines. I personally think that bona fide CCers have a duty to demonstrate they do, and that this should be the price of the support of other boaters if they are not to see an increase in licence. Abusers are hiding under the cloak of continuous cruisers and differentiating has to be part of any solution.

The solutions must be simple:

- Do you have a licence?
- Do you comply with the guidelines?
- Do you overstay on public moorings?

There must be a financial penalty if the answer is 'no', targeted to clear moorings and pay for the policing. There is strong opinion from boaters that the minority who choose 'continuous mooring' cannot expect to be subsidised.

We can pretend that it is BW's problem, but it is our problem and we can best solve it by input on the tools that we want used. And so we return to the need for legal advice as a basis for constructive criticism of the various 'solutions'. We may be accused of being negative, but this is far from the case. We cannot go forward without professional advice to challenge the dismissive responses from BW and suggest alternatives that we believe are legally sound and protect the right to navigate.

I look forward to your support and input to this important activity.

David

THE BLUE PICKLED TURD AWARD

NABO News seeks nominations

We are inviting nominations to name the navigation office (BW Unit, EA region or smaller navigation authority) that oversees the stretch of waterway with the greatest Facility And Replenishment Transit (acronym withheld!) distance.

This should be measured in hours of uninterrupted cruising between one place, where a boat can take on water and dispose of rubbish and portable toilet sewage, and the next. On British Waterways, Chief Executive Robin Evans is quoted as setting a maximum for this at two and a half hours. EA Anglian are reported to be actively investigating this issue and EA Thames have been considering it for some time.

Rules

- 1) To count as a facility point there must be:-
 - a) A bankside mooring available for any boat that can use that waterway
 - b) A tap providing drinking water within 18 metres (60 feet) of the boat's filler and with enough pressure to fill a 450 Litre (100 Gallon) tank through a lay-flat hose, if no other provided, in under 30 minutes.
 - c) A sewage disposal point within 45 Metres (150 Feet) walking distance of the mooring, via a path unobstructed except for a security gate if required.
 - d) Refuse disposal for normal household rubbish within 45 Metres (150 Feet) walking distance of the mooring, via a path unobstructed except for a security gate if required.
 - e) Access to these facilities during all daylight hours.
- 2) The cruising time must be based on a suitable boat speed for the channel and for transit of locks, but it can include an estimated waiting time for the destination facility and/or queuing on the way. Please explain how you made this estimate on your nomination.
- 3) Routes must not include unnecessary diversions but travel time for deviations to visit recognised destinations is permitted, but not the time spent at them.
- 4) Nomination entries must include the location of the facility points and the time between them. If the route crosses office domain boundaries we will judge which navigation office deserves the award.
- 5) Please send entries to the Editor, whose decisions will be final, by the 10th of October.
- 6) The evidence supplied will be used by NABO to promote a better frequency of facilities in problem areas you point out.
- 7) The award trophy, or trophies if more are deserved, will be vacuum sealed for hygiene reasons.

BW DIRECTORS' ROAD-SHOWS

Meetings timetable as at 14th April 2009

In 2008 chief executive Robin Evans undertook a series of customer meetings around the country. Customers welcomed the opportunity to ask questions of a director.

The 2009 programme represents an opportunity to explain BW's 2020 strategy and to hear customers' views about the future structure of the business. Weekends have been chosen as they are most convenient to customers. Directors Simon Salem (SS) and Vince Moran (VM) will be on the road this year, together with Sally Ash (SA) & Jonathan Bryant (JB). Local arrangements are being made in Scotland.

Timetable at time of going to press is:

Location	Venue	Date	Time	*From BW
Crick	Boat Show	Sun 24 May	10.30am	VM SA
Preston	TBC	Sat 6 June	Morning	VM JB
Standedge	Thomas Bourne Room	Sat 6 June	2.30pm	VM JB
Lincoln	TBC	Sat 13 June	pm	SS SA
Barton Marina	'The Waterfront'	Sun 14 June	10am	SS SA
London	TBC	Sat 27 June	Late pm	SS JB
Leeds	BW Office Rooms 1+2	Sat 11 July	am	VM SA
Ellesmere Port	TBC - Boat Museum?	Sat 25 July	am	VM SA
Stoke on Trent	Bridgewater Pottery	Sat 25 July	pm	VM SA
Ratcliffe on Soar	IWA Festival	Sat 29 Aug.	10.30am	SS JB
Ratcliffe on Soar	IWA Festival	Sun 30 Aug.	2pm	VM SA
Hatton	BW Centre Dundas Room	Sat 5 Sept.	11am	SS JB
Mon & Brec	Crickhowell, The Bear Hotel	Sun 6 Sept.	10am	SS JB
Devizes	K&A Trust Canal Centre	Sun 6 Sept.	3.30pm	SS JB

*VM = Vince Moran, Customer Operations Director

SS = Simon Salem, Marketing and Customer Service Director

JB = Jonathan Bryant, Head of Customer Service

SA = Sally Ash, Head of Boating Development

OUR WATERWAYS

Jack Domane bemoans bureaucracy

When Prime Minister Harold MacMillan, standing within the portals of a first class railway carriage door, made one of his few, notable statements to the Press – “...*the public services should be paid for by the people that use them and not by the people who don't.*”

With a surprising disaster, Mr. MacMillan who was earning less than £11.000 p.a. for being Prime Minister, engaged Doctor Beeching providing an annual salary of £24.000 to reshape British Rail and make it pay.

Beeching, who admitted, having no working knowledge whatsoever of the railways, under great secrecy, compiled a list of branch lines that were not paying and closed them. With thousands of jobs lost he then ordered the destruction of the branch lines by ripping up the tracks and selling them for scrap. The cost of taking up the lines was more than that received for scrap value. The stations and infrastructure were left to rot.

However, the main lines still didn't pay because they had lost the important trade of the feeder lines.

If Dr. Beeching had the business forethought to lease out the hundreds of feeder lines that he'd closed to the people that knew and worked on the systems with the control of the Towns that the system passed through and served, we would have a railway system now that would be the envy of the world.

British Rail is just one of the bureaucratic disasters, British Gas, British Steel, British Coal and all the others that fell to privatisation and profit, that we pay dearly for now.

The British Motor Corporation was handed over by the Government to Michael Edwards who, like Dr. Beeching, knew little or nothing of the industry he was to direct. After taking on a new design engineer from the Kitchen Firm Hygena QA, the Company collapsed and was sold off like the others.

British Waterways was set up as a mindless Board in the late 1940's with sole purpose of letting the waterways fill in and rot away. With all the nationalised industries sold off British Waterways still goes floundering on for ever trying to project an expensive, polished changed image.

There are two tiers of Directors, British Waterways Board has 10 Directors who charge fees totalling £192,717 in 2008. There are 9 Executive Directors with collective salaries of £2,021.124 p.a. Add to this figure, annual bonuses and benefits totalling £810.898 the cost to the tax payer and canal users becomes staggering. Dare we add a thought for the pensions that will continue on for years.

Our Prime Minister, Gordon Brown, is currently on an annual salary of £186,000 to run our Country, whilst BW's Chief Executive is on a salary of £279.613 p.a. to run the Waterways and that's without consideration for bonuses, benefits and a £65.000 a year pension which is rising.

Out of the 19 Directors we look to for their expertise in running our canal system,

only one, Mr. Bowker, does actually have his own boat which, presumably, he must use. There is Mr. E. Prescott who apparently claims to have had 45 years experience of fishing on the canals. Apart from one other Board member who had some involvement with the Coventry Council, all the others like Dr. Beeching have neither experience nor interests in the important business that they are highly paid to direct.

For the Board of 19 Directors to have to engage an outside Company [KPMG], who knows no more of the Waterways than they do, paying thousands of pounds to advise them on running a business that they themselves are highly paid to do, reflects the bureaucratic failure of B.W's Boards over the last 60 years.

The importance of B.W's Annual General Meeting is reflected in its main topic:- lengths of square timber posts set between lock gates as new bollards, by expensive contractors, to be questionably unnecessary, in the wrong place and the wrong shape and material. The conclusion was that this wasteful project would be placed on hold.

The general attitude of those who are supposed to be looking after such a valuable, historical and industrial structure is reflected in the attendance of important Board meetings throughout last year:-

- Maggie Carver attended once
- Eric Prescott attended once
- Pommy Sarwall attended once
- Prof. G. Flemming did not attend any.

Due to Government reshuffle we now have a new Waterways Minister who again unfortunately, has no knowledge of our canal system. However, he has suggested that he will be taking a canal boat holiday in the spring. Our previous Waterways Minister has been reshuffled to Work and Pensions, which seems hardly appropriate as the one before him was a Social Works.

Sadly, under the democratic dictatorship that we now live with, our cherished historical waterways has become "the soft golden plum for the boys." It is **us**, the Canal Users, with the guiding hand of the I.W.A. and the backing supportive assistance of our canal magazines and their towpath telegraph system who are left to address and put right our canal system for the benefit of all.



WE USE 'EM

WE PAY FOR 'EM

WE RUN 'EM

The Waterways are our historical treasure, they belong to us and they need to be maintained with care by the experts who know how and not an expensive bureaucratic obsessive control.

The guideline for the Waterways future can be taken from the Chelmer Navigation Authority and the Wey & Arun canal restoration project, which is being undertaken by User Volunteers and not British Waterways who have let the system deteriorate in the past.

So who should run our waterways? – We should, but how? With proven ability that full restoration can be achieved without the B.W. Directorship it's obvious that its management and maintenance can be achieved.

The County Councils throughout our country have delightful well maintained parks that are there for us all to use. They have trees and flowers, pathways, lakes with banks, that on some, people can enjoy boating. It has been hinted before that our canals are our National Park.

Should the Waterways pay for themselves? Of course they should. Can they pay for themselves? Of course they can. – But how?

The centre core would be an Advisory Body of knowledgeable Consultants – 3 members from the I.W.A, 2 members from the Boat Owners Association and 2 members from the W.R.G. They would be a salaried,

Consortium Advisory Group which collectively would certainly cost no more than Mr. Evans' single wage. Several other representatives could be represented at Committee Meetings, based upon an hourly fee.

The canals themselves would be maintained by the existing working Field Staff together with the existing B.W. Staff who manage the canal properties portfolio, both existing valuable assets.

Selected B.W. Office Staff would work with the new amalgamated Consortium whose Consultants would be more than capable of General Management and Directional Advice. They would not however, be solely responsible for the major issues. They would be required to present issues on a "fair for and against" basis and present it to the Public Users on a truly democratic referendum.

The excellent Towpath Telegraph within our canal magazines could provide a valuable presentation for referendum operation. The internet could play an important part together with the telephone system as used in the T.V. programme – *Strictly Come Dancing*.

The Logistics of an Operational Framework would be briefly:-

Each County Council would maintain the footpaths and banks of the canals, as they do with their own park lakes. The canal waters together with its supply and the locks should be paid for by the boat owners. Lockcanal Keepers (lengths man) each with an apprentice, will

to include painting and primary repairs, there would also be Advisory Consultants for the general maintenance and care of the towpaths and banks, closely cooperating with the County Councils. They would also work closer than they do now with the Public Restoration parties.

FINANCES

The Government could provide a reduced grant of £20,000,000, representing some 30p per person per year for the optional use of the canal system.

Towpaths together with their infrastructure and canal banks would

be maintained and paid for by the County Councils that the canal system runs through. The boaters and Anglers would proportionally pay for the waters and locks that they use.

This system provides an equal and fair balance of costs for its canal use. As an example the residents of Birmingham, Manchester and London have the use of the canals on their doorsteps whereby those as far out as Cornwall don't. We all have the opportunity to walk the canal, fish the canal, cycle the canal and own a boat each paying our proportion for what we use.

DELIVERY STATUS NOTIFICATION (FAILURE)

E-BULLETINS

Sorry to keep having to remind members but people still don't understand how it works.

If you want to receive bulletins from NABO then go to www.nabo.org.uk/bulletin.html

and follow the instructions for opting your e-mail address into the list.

We would also ask you to *unsubscribe* any defunct addresses so we don't get delivery failure bounces every time we issue a bulletin. There are so many of these now we are tempted to clear the whole list and ask you all to re-apply.

The system has no connection with the membership database, so please tell our membership administrator separately if you want the e-mail address she has for you to be updated.

DELIVERY FAILED

SORRY

MAILBOX FULL

OVER QUOTA

RECIPIENT NOT RECOGNISED

FAILED

DELIVERY IMPOSSIBLE
ADDRESS ERROR

I am not normally one for nostalgia, but I have recently completed the task of archiving all my old NABO News files onto the NABO website with Brian's able assistance. Ostensibly this is for the benefit of members, but in some respects it is for me. It gives me a sense of completion. Of closure? No, I am not in imminent danger of abandoning the magazine, but if it should happen as a result of unexpected circumstances, I know everything is as orderly as it could be.

One of your new Chairman's first requests of Council was that everyone should find an understudy. **I am still looking**, but perhaps it might be a bit less daunting for anybody taking over NABO News to have easy access to what has gone before.

One thing I have no intention of doing is to resort to fillers in the magazine called '*10 years ago*' mainly because I can't. My first NABO News was Issue 2-2001 and that is as far back as I can go, but interestingly in that year there are some nostalgic articles, as it was NABO's 10th Anniversary. If the history of NABO does interest you, you can retrieve these, and one written in early 2003 by an early chairman, all taking you right back to its formation.

I will admit that in the process of converting these old issues for the website, I did get distracted into reading some of the articles, and particularly thoughts from whoever was Chairman at the time. What it brought back to me was that it has all been said before. The fact that these utterances fell on stony ground, or perhaps shifting sands, has sustained NABO's purpose over all these years. Once or twice there have been mentions of

NABO losing its purpose but it never happened and probably won't.

Why is this? It's difficult to pin down. There will always be 'faceless suits' behind office desks who either don't know about boaters' needs, or don't care, or perhaps, to be more charitable, just don't know the consequences of their decisions. Some may have some idea about waterways but it isn't long before they are moved on and whole process of trying to educate their replacements begins again.

To make items a bit easier to find on the website, we have added the headlines from the magazine covers to the text of the listing, and coloured it according to rough subject categories. Looking down the embellished list shows that the same topics keep coming up again and again, and the overall colour scheme seems not to change much. Some of that probably results from a deliberate attempt to keep a balance, but there are some trends apparent when you look deeper.

The BSS, one of the issues that spurred on the formation of NABO, seemed to drop out of the public eye for a while until the recent 'solid fuel stove fiasco'. Surprisingly '*Crime on the Cut*' featured strongly around 2002 and also faded. Have things improved for members or have our champions lost the taste for battle?

Some people think it is all about BW, but the Environment Agency's attempt to harmonise itself, using a Transport and Works Act Order, hit the headlines hard until DEFRA's lawyers sunk it in a mire of small print. What we achieved there

...it has all
been said
before

was a step change in the way the EA consulted and, in a way, we have been reaping the benefits since, as David has mentioned in his column.

There is a lot of coverage of British Waterways. Maybe too much for our river cruising members. It might not be fair to say but one person does seem to be responsible for, directly or indirectly, more copy for NABO News than anyone else since I began editing it, and I suppose in the post of Head of BW's Boating Development Department that is pretty inevitable. Reactions range from encouragement to help her in her task to calls for her instant dismissal!

British Waterways in general has inspired fairly regular ramps of rising optimism cut short by precipices of fury and depression as soon as theories that they may be beginning to listen and take heed are summarily disproved by the reality.

I don't expect much to change. We cross each bridge as we come to it and how much value there is in looking back I can't say. There may be lessons to be learnt from history, or it might be better not to know and try what you might delude yourself into believing is a new approach. However there is lots of material in these old issues that is still relevant, amusing and informative. They are worth a look.

Stuart

BEEN WHACKED BY YOUR WINDLASS?

I've just had one response on this subject, by a member who answered, 'Never!', and then went on to berate the state of maintenance of some paddle gear. This, is of course a very important point that I believe the team is well aware of. However it is well worth emphasising and I welcome specific examples on this score too.

Please keep the feedback coming in. If it really never happens it is difficult to report. Are you sure it hasn't happened, or nearly happened, to you?



Stuart.



DID YOU KNOW?



British Waterways has the power under Section 8 (5) of the British Waterways Act 1983 to move, without notice, any boat that it deems is causing an obstruction or safety hazard.

Good, you might say, but did you also know that your boat can now be deemed 'an obstruction' if it is moored where another boat might be prevented from mooring?

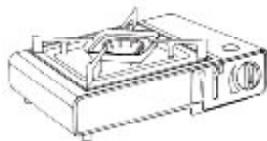
POSTSCRIPT

It's a shame that our esteemed proofreader has had to use as much red ink on the text copied from Press Releases as she has on material written by us amateurs!

Portable Gas Stoves this time

A safety alert has been issued to boaters about portable gas cookers with integral gas canisters following incidents where people have been seriously burnt. The Boat Safety Scheme (BSS) is with Hampshire County Council through its Trading Standards service, urging boat owners to take extra care to follow the manufacturers' operating instructions for these stoves and to not use them onboard boats.

The message relates to the widely available and relatively cheap, small, portable stoves with a compartment for an aerosol type gas canister. The stoves have a generally flat profile and are mostly a square or rectangular shape which is about the size of a brief case or cereal box.



With some of these stoves, it is possible to use the appliance with the pan support or spill tray the wrong way up. This is especially relevant to those models which fit in their carry cases with the pan support or spill tray upside down. A number of accidents onshore in the UK have happened because the pan supports were not the right way up when the cooker is being used.

"It seems that with the pan support upside down and the burner on, heat is transferred onto the aerosol type gas canister in the body of the stove and after a time, the canister can burst causing a violent explosion and fireball", said Leader of Hampshire County Council, Councillor Ken Thornber.

"Reading and following the manufacturers' instructions is critical to the safe operation and avoiding the risk of an explosion", he advised.

BSS manager, Graham Watts added, *"We are also concerned to ensure boaters stay safe from potential gas leaks from these appliances. While the numbers of boat incidents involving aerosol gas canister stoves are still few, they can be dangerous. We are urging boaters not to use these portable cookers in the poorly ventilated, tight confines of a boat. Even before using them ashore, people need to check the assembly and seals very carefully."*

He added *"If all you want is a hot drink onboard a day boat, a flask is probably the simplest and safest way. Where a simple cooker is needed aboard, think about installing a marine spirit stove as an alternative to a portable gas cooker."*

While inland waterway regulations do not ban these cookers, when not in operation, the stove and all gas canisters must be stowed in lockers that are self-draining, or on open deck areas where any leaking gas will flow overboard and not where it could cause a pool of explosive vapour inside the boat.

The advice from the BSS and Hampshire County Council Trading Standards is, before you use a portable gas cooker with integral gas canister, please follow these important safety points:

- **Only use the cooker on shore.**
- **Stow the canisters, used or unused and the stove if it has a canister inserted, in a self-draining gas locker, or on open deck where any escaping gas can flow overboard.**

- Check the cooker's condition before each use. If the gas canister seal looks damaged, or if the cooker or gas canister is extremely rusty and deteriorated, do not use it.
- Familiarise yourself with the operating instructions before use.
- Check if the pan support / spill tray must be turned over after removal from the carry case, to the correct cooking position.
- Ensure that you have the correct type of gas canister for your appliance and that it is being inserted in the right place and in the right way.
- Do not force the gas canister retaining lever into position. It could damage the mechanical linkage and the pressure relief device.
- If you have problems with the retaining lever, check that the pan support / spill tray and gas canister have been correctly installed.
- If you still have problems with the lever OR if you have further problems or concerns, do not attempt to light the cooker.
- If you smell or hear gas leaking before attempting to light it, don't use it.
- If any gas is leaking, ensure that it is being dispersed in free air well away from the boat or any sparks or other sources of ignition.

VIEWS SOUGHT ON CUSTOMER ASSISTANCE

BW is requesting feedback from 'WUSIG' members, NABO being one of them:-

“Customer service, information & telephone assistance

& -

C (0800 47 999 47)

B

I

D /

G B

08.00 18.00 09.00 13.00 IG* F

C C

D ?

?

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IG*

*WUSIG = Waterway Users & Special Interest Group

Bjorn Inabarn rekindles the Great Gate Debate

It's the time of year to debate leaving exit gates open again because, like the continuous moorer debate, it is a reliable source of material for NABO News, and people will be using locks more now the days are longer. What I haven't seen in this magazine is a proper analysis of the problem.

Can logic be brought to bear to change ingrained habits of the boating population? Is the reluctance to change based on: (a) good reason; (b) BW's ruling; or (c) just the British sense of propriety? If the latter, it might not have any more chance of success than a campaign for men who want to wear their flies undone!

There is an argument that says that when a lock is unattended for a period with all gates closed, the level in the chamber settles to a halfway point where the leakage into the chamber equals the leakage out. The head of water is thus divided between the upper and lower gates and the flow will be less than if the full drop of the lock is held back by only one set of gates. However a lock in this state will be ready for nobody. If it acquires this state during the day between uses then it must leak so badly it should be fixed as a matter of priority.

If water conservation is the objective, why not just apply the 'all gates closed' rule at night, say from three hours before sunset to nine o'clock the next morning, but maybe all the time in the winter?



The other questions to ask is whether saving time is an issue on the canals, and whether extra effort is good for your fitness. This is specially true of those locks where the gates were originally hung to open themselves and the great British public is left in non-blissful ignorance! On the other side, there is the matter of safety, an open gate allows anyone falling in the option of swimming out.

One could argue that exit gates are left open on many rivers, perhaps because water saving is less of an issue, although flood management and debris control are issues on fluvial waters and contribute to how a lock should be left.

Going back to the 'time & motion' study – while there is significant boat traffic, logic dictates that leaving exit gates open will save on effort and wear on the infrastructure, as the gaps in the following table show. This is based on a normal lock, not in a flight. The saving is less on a flight as much of the wasted effort comes from landing and picking up a crew who would walk on a flight.

* The steps marked with an asterisk may or may not be needed, according to whether you can open the entrance gates without equalising the level, which in turn depends several factors: whether using the previous lock has changed the level in the pound; how long since the lock was used; and how much the lock leaks. The former is more likely where the pounds are short.

EXIT GATES LEFT CLOSED	EXIT GATES LEFT OPEN
<p><u>LOCK AGAINST</u> Land the crew Crew walk from landing to lock Some crew walk to exit end Check no boat approaching Check exit paddles are down</p> <p>Draw entrance paddles Await level Open entrance gates Close entrance paddles Move boat from landing to chamber Close entrance gates Draw exit paddles Await level Open exit gates Close exit paddles Move boat from chamber to landing Close exit gates Crew walk from lock to landing Crew board Boat leaves</p>	<p><u>LOCK AGAINST</u> Land the crew Crew walk from landing to lock Some crew walk to exit end Check no boat approaching Check exit paddles are down Close exit gates § Draw entrance paddles Await level Open entrance gates Close entrance paddles Move boat from landing to chamber Close entrance gates Draw exit paddles Await level Open exit gates Close exit paddles</p> <p>Crew board in chamber or lock tail Boat leaves</p>
<p><u>LOCK 'IN FAVOUR'</u> Land crew Crew walk from landing to lock Draw entrance paddle(s) * Check exit paddles are down Await level * Open entrance gates Close entrance paddle(s)* Move boat from landing to chamber Close entrance gates Draw exit paddles Await level Open exit gates Close exit paddles Move boat from chamber to landing Close exit gates Crew walk from lock to landing Crew board Boat leaves</p>	<p><u>LOCK 'IN FAVOUR'</u> Land crew in chamber or lock tail</p> <p>Close entrance gates Draw exit paddles Await level Open exit gates Close exit paddles</p> <p>Crew board in chamber Boat leaves</p>

* See previous page

§ Note, this is the only extra step required, and offset by not having to close gates, but can be very irritating for a single crew if the gates are double, self opening and there is no way to cross the lock. Crack the paddle first!

RIVERS

River Severn / Gloucester Dock safe haven abolished

Despite the considerable effort that NABO and other users expended a few years ago into convincing British Waterways to grant Safe Haven status to river boats using the River Severn at Gloucester, this concession has recently been withdrawn without any consultation.

Boaters familiar with the river at this location will know that the current can be extreme and there is nowhere safe to moor outside Gloucester. Recognising that boats with “river registration certificates” (NOT licences please note!) could, and still can, enter both Stourport Basin and Diglis Basin at Worcester, it was logical for the same concession to be applied to Gloucester Docks. Similar concessions apply elsewhere in the country – the passage between Keadby and Selby to avoid the tidal Trent for example – so BW had not set a precedent at Gloucester.

Unfortunately, BW says that craft abused the 48 hr mooring permission and ventured beyond the first bridge and proceeded to cruise the Gloucester & Sharpness Canal. We contend that this is a management and enforcement issue and that river users should not be penalised for the transgressions of others.

Having received only a curt response, NABO has instigated a Stage One Complaint on the failure of BW to properly consult prior to taking this momentous decision, of which many boaters were unaware.

Thames lock manning criticised by user groups



River User Groups, including the Association of Thames Yacht Clubs under the chairmanship of Michael Shefras MBE, have been vocal about staffing levels over Easter on the lower Thames. They ask for evidence:-

“We are advised that over the Easter Holiday period Thursday 9 April to Monday 13 April a number of locks were not manned. Had the weather been better it would have probably caused more concern, but ATYC believe that the locks should be manned every weekend during the season from Easter to the end of October, and certainly the same for the bank holidays.

To enable us to ascertain exactly what happened from 9 to 13 April it would be appreciated if you could e-mail Michael Shefras on michael@shefras.demon.co.uk. If you faced locks unmanned other than between 1300 – 1400.

Please only give your actual experiences if possible, with the day and time.”

If you were affected please contact Michael directly or through your Thames representatives.

news release

Take note, register your boat!

The Environment Agency would like to remind all boat owners to register their boat before using it on the River Thames this year.

All money raised from registering your boat, together with government funding, is used to improve and maintain the river and lock structures. The funds also provide facilities and services such as moorings and fresh water, as well as extra help at locks during the busy season.

Angela Quayle, Strategic Waterway Manager for the River Thames said:

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Getting registered is now even easier:

Customers from previous years can renew their annual registration over the telephone by credit or debit card. Call our craft registration team on 0118 953 5650.

If you plan to visit the River Thames this year then we have three types of visitor registrations available and we offer the option to mix and match to suite your river holiday needs, giving a total of 67 days on the beautiful River Thames.

If you require an annual registration for the first time, applications can only be made by post.

Checks are carried out at all lock sites and we work with the Police to carry out regularly checks and patrols along the River. Whilst we would rather people register and display a valid licence, we do regularly prosecute those who do not pay their way.

Angela Quayle commented: 300

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Use the BW Internal Complaints Procedure (ICP) that is. The Vice-chairman explains.

You may be awed by the ICP or think it is a sledge hammer to crack a nut, but it is just a commitment by BW to take your feedback seriously, and for them to obey rules they have made for themselves on who responds when. It is open for anybody to use and it may even be BW's choice to treat what you thought was a trivial query as an 'internal complaint'. Don't be daunted by this, it doesn't hurt!

On the other hand you could ask NABO to do it for you. There are advantages, as NABO knows the rules, and BW knows that NABO knows the rules, so we can use polite phrases like '*seek clarification*' and still be sure of establishing an enquiry which BW might not follow up from an individual. We can also use the phrase '*another example of...*' to reinforce our points which, as an individual, you may not have the knowledge to do. NABO also knows to whom, and when, to send copies further up the management chain to improve the chance of results.

As an example, I had three queries from members to put to Tony Harvey, General Manager of BW West Midlands. He replied immediately that he was treating them as 'official complaints' and, although he had to apologise for taking longer than he should have done to give a full response, he did uphold them and returned three apologies and promises of action.

One was from a member who was told by a BW official he couldn't return to a visitor mooring in Birmingham until twelve months had elapsed. The second was about a non-BW person exceeding their authority on the moorings opposite Peel's Wharf in Fazeley, and the third was that BW was ignoring its 'Statement of Intent' to provide a mix of mooring time limits at Alrewas. All could have had national ramifications.

We have more enquiries going through the 'complaints' system with West Midlands concerning the replacement of perfectly good bollards at Shutt Hill Lock, the lack of bollards at Penkridge Sanitary Station and the lack of free and accessible facilities north of Birmingham generally.

These are fairly local issues that would be handled by the Midlands Regional Secretary if we had one, but they have national implications too and can be added to the arsenal from which we can fire more salvos of '*another example of...*' if necessary.

In the Northwest, a result for NABO was getting BW to think again about boaters' needs during development at Marple. Your Northwest Secretary is even in contact with the developers direct about incorporating facilities.

The Internal Complaints Procedure is mainly about regional issues rather than national policy, but it all matters to the 'boater on the cut'. Don't be afraid to use it, involving your NABO Regional Secretary if you wish, or use it on behalf of others by helping or even becoming your NABO Regional Secretary if the post is vacant!

**WANTED - WEST MIDLANDS
& ANGLIAN SECRETARIES**

Howard Anguish joined this grand user get-together

What do boaters, cyclists, anglers, horses, ramblers, heritage groups, canoeists, museums, and Dutch barge enthusiasts have in common? The inland waterways of course, and twice a year representatives from groups and national organisations which look after these varied interests meet at BW's Hatton Offices to debate issues, and to explore the best way to coexist and make best use of the waterways.

This years Spring WUSIG meeting – the initials stand for Waterways Users and Special Interest Groups – was held in Hatton on Wednesday 22 April, a day shared this year with arguably one of the most important budgets for many years. It was, as usual, very well attended with around 40 or so members of these varied interest groups and hosted by British Waterways with Simon Salem, Vince Moran, Sally Ash, Madge Bailey and Jonathan Bryant.

It was appropriate that the first item on the agenda concerned the announcement by the treasury the BW property Portfolio would be ring fenced and would remain in BW's hands – at least for the short term. It was very apparent that BW were very relieved to receive this news and the meeting was told that the next step would be to form a BW subsidiary company to look at the best way to manage the income from this portfolio. It was good to start the meeting on such a positive note and I think that the welcome news set the tone for the rest of the day which covered a variety of subjects and ranged across the whole spectrum of waterway users interests. Rather than giving a blow by blow account here are some highlights which, hopefully, might capture the flavour of the points covered.

British Waterways have put forward a couple of proposals to DEFRA for large scale funding under a scheme for improving the environment. This seems to be looked at favourably and if successful would go towards reducing outstanding maintenance issues and continuing with towpath improvement schemes. Alongside this potential extra funding BW said that they are actively considering including the waterways "track" in their balance sheet in future. Up to now this has always been ignored and the argument being considered is that with an increased asset value there is potential for central government to look more favourably in any requests for increased funding. It will be interesting to see how this one develops.

A great deal of the morning was taken up in discussing a paper put forward by cycling groups in relation to cycling on towpaths and its effect on other towpath users. It has to be said that the cyclist's representative was subject to a lively debate, not all of which agreed with the proposals in his paper. As an indication, the responses from the meeting ranged from broad agreement that some "code of conduct" should be drawn up for cyclists, to keeping the towpaths for boaters only, and every shade of opinion in between. As a result, a subgroup has been formed which will look in more depth at the proposals and report back at the next WUSIG meeting in the autumn.

For those whose chief interest is boating on the waterways, the main paper under consideration was a draft proposal, submitted in the week before the meeting by BW, which was a "pre-consultation" draft prior to the publication of an Online

Mooring Policy document which will take place later this year and which will look at all the aspects of mooring on canals and rivers, including continuous cruising and those that don't comply with CC guidelines, long term and casual mooring, and "unauthorised residency" at leisure moorings.

The meeting wasn't expected to come to any conclusions about this complicated subject. In fact the consultation paper proper hasn't been written yet. Its aim was to assist BW in making sure that, as far as can be achieved, the paper, when published, will be relevant and will cover all the issues which are presently causing concern and controversy, namely congestion caused by too many online moorings, and perceived abuse of the continuous cruising guidelines as presently published.

It quickly became apparent that they were right in thinking the subject was too broad to come to any conclusion at the meeting, and so all members were asked to submit final suggestions by the end of May. After this BW will draw together all the proposals and suggestions they receive and then issue the formal consultation document for consideration in mid summer. This will be issued in the normal way on the BW website and will also be widely available in the waterways press and online, and will be backed up by a series of BW Directors meetings which will be held around the country during the summer (See page 7). We would urge anyone who is interested to attend one of these meetings, and feel free to contact someone on NABO Council if they need briefing on the background.

A brief discussion concerned conflicts with boaters and anglers when match fishing competitions were held which included pegs along designated visitor's moorings. The angler's representative confirmed that some weeks prior to such a match that the local BW staff and also local boater's organisations would be informed. It was pointed out to him that many boaters – hirers and strangers to the district - would be unaware that a match was taking place and the presence of anglers along a stretch of visitors moorings might lead to conflict. He promised to raise this issue to see what could be done to alleviate what is becoming a growing problem in some areas.

As usual, it was very useful to attend the WUSIG meeting on behalf of NABO and to hear sometimes conflicting views about priorities. It is a positive thing to see the coming together of such diverse groups, all with the aim of sustaining and improving that which brings us together – a deep interest in the Inland Waterways.

It was also interesting to hear from Simon Salem that BW had a "much too difficult" file – a point he made more than once! Some of us are quick to knock BW when they undoubtedly get things wrong but it is encouraging to see that they do appear to be listening to their customers when we try to do our bit in bringing about improvements.

This "much too difficult" file could make an interesting article - Simon? Ed.



Trolley Hotline - 01923 201120

CYCLING ON TOWPATHS

The paper mentioned in the WUSIG report was from the International Mountain Bike Association and basically made the following points:-

- **Access is unnecessarily restrictive** –

Cycling permitted : 1100 miles, cycling not permitted:1100 miles. Cyclists can't understand why very similar widths / surfaces are regarded as acceptable on some lengths and not on others.

- **Information about where you can cycle is poor.**

- **It is claimed that cycling on towpaths can be hazardous to cyclists and other users.**

The overwhelming majority of cyclists have a strong sense of responsibility and will be sensitive to the needs of walkers, anglers and boaters. Cyclists are highly conscious of the hazards implicit in cycling, but few would argue that cycling on towpaths is more hazardous than sharing with road traffic. BW records indicate very low levels of cycling related accidents.

- **It is claimed that cycling can excessively damage fragile towpaths.**

There is actually very little evidence that cycling is any more damaging to paths than walking.

- **It is suggested that towpaths are generally not suitable for cycle training or cycle events.**

This widely held view reflects concerns about the use of speed, or heavy cycle use causing conflict with other users. Use of the towpaths for events, or by organised groups of cyclists should be subject to permissions by local BW managers. The use of the quieter towpaths as part of recreational rides by cycle clubs should be acceptable providing no other organised activity is taking place on the towpath at the same time, e.g. fishing matches.

Any situation which encourages cyclists to ride fast would not normally be appropriate but use of the network for competitive training should be acceptable - but practised sensitively when few other users are present, and where sightlines are good.

- **Cycling managed through licences.**

It is likely that many cyclists do not apply for them - particularly those using the towpaths on an infrequent basis for urban or semi urban commuting or utility journeys. Licensing should therefore be dropped. A process of providing third party liability & personal accident insurance should be investigated.

DID YOU KNOW?

On 27/4/1954 there was an adjournment debate in Parliament entitled LONDON TRAFFIC (USE OF CANALS) in which Mr. J. E. S. Simon (MP for Middlesbrough, West) recommended turning London's canals into relief roads. The debate went on some time before a Mr Molson pointed out that even a broad gauge canal was far too narrow for a dual carriageway and asked what could be done with the 54 bridges and two tunnels on the route!

THE MCA DRAFT CODE FOR HIRE BOATS

An update from Howard Anguish

In the February edition of NABO News I reported on the wording of a proposed Code of Practice for the construction and operation of hire boats on Inland Waterways, particularly in the realm of safety and stability. The introduction of such a code was thought to be necessary following a number of recent incidents and was requested following investigations by the MAIB – the Marine Accident Investigation Branch.

As this new code was aimed at the Hire Boat industry it was worrying to find that boats under shared ownership were included in the definitions in the draft code, causing great concern among those of us who choose to share a boat with others. This concern was expressed in a petition to MCA which resulted in NABO being asked to attend the next code steering group meeting on 12th of March in London, which I did as the NABO shared boat owner's representative on Council.

It quickly became apparent during the meeting that the inclusion of shared boats in the draft code had come about because of the commonly held misconception that shared ownership private boats and time share boats were one and the same thing, despite the ruling from the Waterways Ombudsman three years ago which clarified the position regarding licensing of shared boats with BW.

I am pleased to report that the MCA have agreed that there is a difference and that shared ownership private boats should not be included in the code. The wording of the offending definition in the draft code has been changed to acknowledge this and which, I am sure will come as a relief to those shared boat owners who saw the initial draft as a thin edge of a wedge. All in all, this was a good outcome and thanks to all who supported our efforts and especially the vigilance of Allan Richards, the NABO member who first drew my attention to the offending wording and who organised the petition.

PHOSPHATE FREE?

Guidance from BW

“There are an increasing number of "green" products on the market, many of which will be phosphate-free (it will say on the label). Examples are Ecover, Tesco's "Naturally" range, Sainsbury's "Cleanhome" range, Faith in Nature's "Clear Spring" range, or the Bio-D range available from many Oxfam shops. For washing machines, some "wash-balls" are also phosphate-free, such as the T-Wave laundry discs.

For floating businesses such as hotel boats, floating restaurants and food retail boats that have to comply with rigorous health and hygiene rules, Ecover produce a range of eco-responsible professional products for the food industry.

Many of these products are available from Tia, a company that sells environmentally responsible products to the inland waterways community from a narrowboat in the South Midlands area.

Shampoos and shower gels by ethical stores such as Lush and Body Shop are also likely to be acceptable.”

[I've seen no phosphates on ingredients lists for any shampoos or shower gels . Ed.]

GADGET SHOW LIVE

Stuart witnesses a Channel 5 programme out of its box

A happy coincidence was that the first day of 'Gadget Show Live' exhibition was the day before the April Council meeting, and fairly close – in the NEC near Birmingham, and that Carole thought a ticket would be a different sort of birthday present (including being a good opportunity for me to buy a present for myself!)

The foyer was packed long before the doors opened, likewise the hall after the doors opened. Several stalls competing to sell amplifiers and speakers were thrashing out the same sort of thudding synthetic 'music', so you couldn't hear yourself think or converse, and certainly you could not assess their ability to reproduce any sound that hadn't been mangled by other processors, amplifiers and speakers first. All this racket topped off with a stall selling synthesiser drum kits!

I wasn't expecting anything boat related, but was disappointed not to see anything Apple. I did however buy a couple of the gadgets on offer that might interest you.



How many otherwise 100% 'compliant' and conscientious boaters have found themselves overstaying on a mooring because their cat won't read the time limit signs? The cure could be the '**Loc8tor**' which acts like the radio collars you see on wildlife documentaries.

A tag, no bigger than the end of your thumb, clips to the pet's collar and a credit card sized handset claims to detect and direct you to it from up to 100 yards away according to how much is in the way of the radio signal. Up to four tags, each with a unique digital 'signature', can be 'introduced' to the handset. From then on you press a button to select which tag you want to find and the handset will light an LED bar display according to how strongly the tag responds. Reception is directional, being strongest when the handset is pointed at the tag, so you wave it around and head the way the signal is strongest.



We have an 18 year old dog who can be a bit wayward, so he now has a tag. The detector got a bit confused when first tried in the boat but works better when not surrounded by metal. The tag beeps too when being searched, which bemuses the old dog a bit, but could help find him if he is hidden from view. I don't expect it to work through water, but the tags still work when sealed in a little plastic bag. The tag battery is expected to last 9 months if only activated once a day.

Obviously you could use it to find key bunches, errant offspring, or your car in a car park. Shame on you if you need it to find your boat! Website: www.loc8tor.co.uk

The other gadget was a TV 'flicker' simulator called 'FakeTV', which is to fool unwelcome visitors that you are at home. It changes colour and brightness to cast a light like the reflected glare from a TV set. Using LED lights it consumes a fraction of the power used by leaving a television on, but gives the effect of shot changes and movement on a TV. Just another weapon in the armoury to convince the light-fingered to try somewhere else while you are out cruising.

Website: www.saboteurcrimeprevention.com.

I couldn't afford, or carry away, the **Power8 Workshop**, an all-singing-all-dancing cordless workbox with drill-press, drill-screwdriver, jigsaw, circular saw, table saw, scroll saw, halogen light etc. Nor could I get close enough to assess its power and accuracy, but it looked promising for DIY fit-out work.

Website: www.power8workshop.com

Preaching to the already converted was the **Dyson** stand with the little DC24 vacuum cleaner. The telescopic handle and ball steering makes it ideal for inside boats. Ours hasn't got there yet, it is too good at home! Also preaching to the converted was **Brompton**, with a test track for their folding bikes. There were some electric bikes there but some of the other zany modes of personal transport seen on the TV show were disappointingly absent.

Being the end of school holidays the kids were there in force doing all the interactive stuff so I didn't get to try the Formula One simulator or get recruited by the RAF. Might have been tempted if they had a flight simulator!

In all – hard on the feet and the ears but worth a few hours to see how the modern generation might live.

CAN YOU HELP GET MORE MEMBERS?

Richard Carpenter explains the latest drive

NABO needs exposure round the network where the ordinary boater can see what we have to offer. To this end, we have made some lightweight roof displays which fold flat for storage and assemble to just over 3 foot by 1 foot. Each only needs something heavy placed inside to hold it down and has a showerproof holder for leaflets.

If you would like to have one of these to help spread the word, please contact me, especially if you are going to any smaller events. Don't forget, if you fill in your name in the 'Introduced by' box on all the leaflets you only need three takers a year to get your subscription to NABO free!



RCR Advertisement



eavesdrops from under the Council table

Well. It was worth coming back! Nine bods came this time and eight had fish and chips - plenty of flaky batter for me - and only the Chairman had a faggot!

Problem for me though was that right at the start came the warning that it was going to be another long session - so a long wait to pick up some food! They had some big meeting with all their mates with our dreaded friend Mr BW coming up. Some mention of woosig. Sounds like my bug mates with pincers have been in the glasses again and the meeting sure will be a long one!

All the bods had to work through 15 pages of some consultation notes and agree what they wanted to say at the meeting with our old friend BW so that he could prepare some consultation notes for all the bods to look at again! Seems to me that there is no shortage of consultation but it is not a tactic of the BW fella to look like he's taking notice of his customers by all this consultation when in fact it's a ploy to delay things, look like they are doing something and just ignore most views? My bods, who I am really warming to cos you have to admire the fact they will plough through pages and pages of stuff, are pretty fed up with Mr BW on such a lot of things!

There was a bit of talk about them not being seen to be permanently critical of old BW as the majority of his staff out on the cut were helpful, efficient and truly loved the Waterways. So when they get things right they should be praised - seems to me though from what I can pick up it's the people at the top end who are just out of touch - big time - from what their customers actually want and need.

I must admit I started to get bored by about page 10 of this big document so I crawled along to where one of the bods was sitting, who seems to have more files and paper around him than all the others put together! I managed to slip into a massive file that with thick with papers and very yellowy and dusty. Seems they keep a record of everything they say in their meetings - what an awful job that must be for one of their volunteers cos they do go on and on! Anyway I had a look at 1994, 1998 and 2003 and quite apart from the fact that several of the bods were named then who were here today (that is dedication!!!) all the stuff they had issues about were just the same!

A recurring theme is that the people who run the canals at the top end of management have always been out of touch with their users - the ones that look after the Rivers seem to be much better I note.

I read somewhere on my travels - one word at a time is all I can manage with having to stand on them - that every successful business worked on providing the products its customers wanted and needed - it seems the canal blokes struggle to keep them all working cos they are short of money but then waste loads of it on things the customers either don't need or need in a better or simpler form. They then keep coming back for more money off their customers without providing what they want - in any other business they would well be out of business if you know what I mean?

So, not that Mr BW will take any notice of a bug, but what's needed is CONSULTATION - LISTEN - PROVIDE - that's the way for Mr BW to gain support and yes - probably some praise! I get the feeling that he seriously lacks people at the top who use the waterways themselves and they don't own boats or even go properly boating and will never understand and provide what these NABO bods are looking for. Any of the blokes round the table could advise them I reckon and save Mr BW a fortune! But Hey - what do I know - I am a bug with a small brain and a hard shell!

Incidentally where are the ladies, chaps? Shouldn't you be pc and get some to work with you on your Council - it seems to me that most of you get them doing all the heavy work on your boats surely they should have a bit of a say on all this - he he?

So that's it - I look forward to the next feed from this lot - hopefully a more adventurous choice from the menu and I quite look forward to how the consultation about the consultation went!

Pleasant crawling about on the Cut!



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Your Letters

Note - Opinions expressed here are independent of NABO policy and statements made have not been verified as true

BW and VAT

I saw the letter about VAT on Boat Licences from Ann Berry in your April issue. I was concerned about her experience and apologise to her for our poor customer service. When she e-mailed us and asked for her refund of about £11 we should have sent it to her. We have done so now.

Of wider interest for your readers is the implication of the published letter that in some way BW is trying to 'hang on' to the extra VAT. This is not the case. We published details of entitlements to refund on our website on 28 November. It is true

that we prefer to hold the refund as a credit to the next licence renewal because the costs of administering refunds of around £10 is quite high, but anyone who wants a refund rather than a credit can have one.

We are of course charging VAT at 15% on all licence renewals currently and will continue to do so until the rate changes (currently expected to be December 2009).

I hope your members find this information useful.

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